

VZCZCXRO2141
RR RUEHPA
DE RUEHOS #1001/01 1991323
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 181323Z JUL 06
FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7621
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 7574

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 001001

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W
STATE FOR INR/AA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/11/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EPET](#) [EAID](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: CHIEF HORSFALL SAYS OBASANJO INATTENTIVE TO THE
DELTA

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reason 1.4 (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Chief Albert Horsfall, recently named by President Obasanjo as Honorary Advisor to the President on Social and Economic Development of the Coastal States of the Niger Delta, told the Consul General short-term results and a long-term comprehensive plan are needed to stave additional unrest in the Delta. However, he did not believe that President Obasanjo was adequately focused on the Delta. Horsfall revealed that Obasanjo had not funded the new Commission nor had the President earmarked funds for short-term projects in the Delta. Given these limitations, Horsfall said his primary objective was to draft a long-term strategy for dealing with the Delta and pine that a successor would implement it. Hoping to be that successor, Horsfall said he would run for the presidency next year. End summary.

IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED TO HEAD-OFF FURTHER DELTA UNREST

¶2. (C) During a July 9 conversation, Chief Albert Horsfall, Honorary Advisor to the President on Social and Economic Development of the Coastal States of the Niger Delta, expounded that the GON needed to develop a two-part approach to ameliorating conditions in the Delta. First, in order to mollify the young militants and thus dissuade them from further disruptive activity, the GON needed to establish some short-term development projects. These projects should begin within the next six months and seek to employ militant youths, he declared. Such projects would have an irenic effect by giving the local populace hope of better things to come and by showing the militants that their hue and cry, although rendered in criminal timbre, was heard and acted upon by the GON.

¶3. (C) As the short-term approach would be used to stem a sudden eruption, a longer-term strategy was needed to restore the Delta's underlying problems. However, for want of time, funds, inclination and talent, the present administration would not be able to launch the long-term master strategy, Horsfall forecasted

¶4. (C) Continuing in this vein, Horsfall dismissed claims that he was appointed to lead the committee because he was President Obasanjo's "man." Horsfall recounted that he learned of his appointment over the radio. Since then, contact with Obasanjo had been minimal and funding for the new body was less than that. Horsfall described Obasanjo's

grandiloquent press comments about a "Marshall Plan" for the Delta as pabulum. Horsfall concluded that Obasanjo had little in store for the Delta with regard to a new development strategy. Obasanjo's tack was to stand tall publicly but to shrink into his customary miserliness when it came to funding.

15. (C) Horsfall asserted that, after being appointed to this job, he was determined to do the best he could notwithstanding anemic support from Obasanjo. However, Horsfall stated he realized his restrictions. Thus, he held no hope of spurring the GON to place a significant number of short-term pressure-alleviating projects on the ground. Instead, his focus was to bring stakeholders together to craft a comprehensive master strategy for development in the Delta. His prior meeting with various stakeholders (oil companies, government, NDDC, NGOs, etc.) demonstrated the lack of coordination. In one local area, everyone was doing the same thing while other locales went unassisted. He decried the lack of rhyme and reason in some of these development programs. Thus he saw as his primary role the drafting of this master plan. He hoped to be able to present this plan to President Obasanjo in a few months. His desire was not for Obasanjo to begin implementation but to endorse it and bequeath it to his successor so that it would be the foundation for the next administration's Delta policy.

16. (C) After outlining his plans to address the Niger Delta, Horsfall asked the Consul General how the USG could help. Consul General replied that one thing Horsfall or the GON should not expect was funding. Nigeria had sufficient money to resolve this problem. The CG stated the USG did support a nonviolent resolution to the Delta's problems. In this vein, the CG explained that we might explore the possibility of providing technical assistance to well-defined

LAGOS 00001001 002 OF 002

projects that would actually address youth restiveness and unemployment in the Delta. However, the provision of any such assistance would only come at the end of a gradual process and based on an assessment of GON seriousness and possible effectiveness. For now, we would take the role of benign observers of the conflict resolution process. In response, Chief Horsfall said a letter inviting the Mission to observe Delta commission deliberations would be forwarded shortly.

HORSFALL TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT

17. (C) Chief Horsfall claimed he is "not yet a politician," but conceded the truth behind recent press claims he would run for President, saying "I will probably have to do that." Horsfall claimed that supporters in his native South-South zone were badgering him to toss his hat into the ring.

COMMENT

18. (C) While Chief Horsfall sounds sincere in his desire to improve conditions in the Delta region, he lacks a successful track record. He presided over the failed Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC), the NDDC's predecessor. While appearing very deliberate and thoughtful, Horsfall was guilty of several lacunae.

19. (C) First, he claimed that a short-term fix was needed to prevent ructions in the Delta, yet focus was a long-term strategy. Second, he claimed little confidence in Obasanjo but accepted this seemingly important role from Obasanjo which means he could be scapegoated if the Commission proves ineffective in dousing militant ardor. Third, he claimed to believe that Obasanjo, as outgoing President, could somehow commit a successor administration to Horsfall's master plan

while also deriding Obasanjo's attempt to choose a successor.

Fourth, he claimed that his objective was to craft a master plan - not implement it - yet he still canvassed for USG material support for implementation of projects that do not yet exist. Last, he did not think his presidential ambition would affect his role and work on the Commission or how President Obasanjo and others would view him.

¶10. (C) This is our first go-round with Horsfall; he might have purposely dissembled to get our reaction to certain statements or perhaps he was stating what he thought we wanted to hear. Alternatively, he could have been giving us unadulterated Horsfall. If so, he is outwardly affable, and if you just examine each of his positions in isolation from the others, he seems a reasonable person. However, when viewed in their totality, his thoughts reveal a lack of the depth and coherence needed to help pull the Delta out of its current turbidity. End comment.
BROWNE